

Point Arguello Coast Guard Rescue Station  
Lompoc Vicinity  
Santa Barbara County  
California

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C.

US COAST GUARD RESCUE STATION  
AND LOOKOUT TOWER

HAER

(Page 1)

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

U.S. COAST GUARD RESCUE STATION AND LOOKOUT TOWER

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Location: 2-3/4 miles southeast of Point Arguello, Santa  
Barbara, California. 15 miles southwest of  
Lompoc, California; located on Vandenberg Air  
Force Base.

UTM: 719330 E. / 3826195 N.

Quad: Point Arguello (15')

Date of Construction: 1936 to 1939

Present Owner: 4392 Aero Space Group DEIR  
Vandenberg Air Force Base  
Santa Barbara, California 93437

Present Use: The older elements of the facility are no longer  
in use; two recently reconstructed transmission  
towers within the compound are currently used by  
the Air Force.

## Significance:

The U.S. Coast Guard Rescue Station and Lookout Tower at Point Arguello, California, was established on December 17, 1936, and ceased normal operations on December 31, 1941. The site was purchased by the Coast Guard on July 22, 1935, and it remained under their jurisdiction until February 10, 1958, when it was transferred to the U.S. Navy. This site, on an open cove approximately two miles south of the Point Arguello Lighthouse, was selected as a location for a rescue station because of the long history of naval disasters which have occurred on this section of the California Coast.

Between the years of 1936 and 1941 the Coast Guard constructed on the site an Administration and Barracks Bldg. (1936), a Garage Bldg. (1936), a small Water Treatment Bldg. (1936), A Flag Tower (1936), a Lookout Tower (1937), a granite rock Breakwater (1939), and a Dock, Marine Railway and Boathouse (1937). All of these structures were designed by the Civil Engineering Office of the Coast Guard in Washington D.C. and they were built on contract by private California construction firms. The architectural imagery evoked was that of the residential Colonial Revival; a style almost universally employed (1900-1940) by the Coast Guard for its many land facilities.

When activated in 1936 the facility was manned by two officers and seven surfmen; when it ceased its normal operation on December 31, 1941, there were one officer and fifteen enlisted personnel. The two principle activities of the facility centered on three rescue boats sheltered in the Boathouse and the manning of the Flag Tower and the Lookout Tower. The three rescue boats could be quickly launched on a Marine Railroad which extended from the Boathouse to the harbor. During its brief six year period of existence the facility participated on only two occasions in rescue operations.

With the activating of nearby Camp Cooke on October 5, 1941, the facility was partially occupied by military personnel. By the end of 1944 a number of additional temporary buildings had been added to the site. After 1945 the Signal Tower and the Lookout Tower were replaced (in 1952-1953) by two new metal towers. The facility was disestablished by the Coast Guard in 1952. It was acquired by the U.S. Navy in 1958, and in 1966 it was transferred to the U.S. Air Force, and it became part of Vandenberg Air Force Base. It is currently proposed (1979) to replace the Boathouse with a new facility to serve Vandenberg Air Force Base.

Historians:

David Gebhard and David Bricker, October, 1979.

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In 1848 the first of the U.S. Coast Guard Rescue Stations was established at Spermaceti Cove, near Sandy Hook, New Jersey.<sup>1</sup> These initial Rescue Stations were simple, basic affairs consisting of a small boathouse, a boat and a few other pieces of equipment. Since these stations were manned by volunteer help from nearby, their effectiveness was minimal. Six years later, in 1854, funds were provided so that some of the stations could be manned by Coast Guard keepers.<sup>2</sup>

Major expansion of the Life Saving Service occurred between 1878 and 1915 when this Service was established as a regular unit of the Treasury Department.<sup>3</sup> During these years stations were built along the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, on the Great Lakes, and on the Pacific Coast.<sup>4</sup> By 1892 there were 179 stations: 139 on the Atlantic and Gulf Coasts, 34 on the Great Lakes, and 6 on the Pacific.<sup>5</sup> When the Rescue Service was integrated into the Coast Guard in 1915, the number of stations had grown to 280.<sup>6</sup> By 1930, through consolidation and the addition of a few new stations, the number had decreased to 276 Rescue Stations along the coastline of the Continental United States, supplemented by one in Alaska and along the Ohio River.<sup>7</sup> With the added funding available, the individual stations began to assume a set form consisting of a boathouse (usually large enough to house two to three rescue boats), an accompanying dock and launching platform, a lookout tower, a barracks, and often, a separate keeper's or officer's quarters.

The technological complexity of the Rescue Stations also increased after 1878. Horses were introduced in 1880 to help launch and retrieve the boats; telephones came into use in 1884.<sup>8</sup> At some of the earliest stations the open lifeboats were carried and pulled by hand to the water and then launched. With the introduction of larger boats and the desire for greater speed in reaching the water, provision was made for two- or four-wheel

carriages pulled either by hand or by horses. In an article published in 1884 in The American Architect and Building News, it was noted that "On the coast of Maine...and on the Pacific Coast, as well as on the piers of the Lake harbors, the self-righting and self-bailing lifeboat is in general use, and as it is very heavy, the stations are constructed with reference to it, being provided with an inclined plane furnished with rollers, on which the boat rests, and is let into the water by machinery."<sup>9</sup>

The precise year that an actual Marine Railway was introduced into a Coast Guard Rescue Station is presently unknown. The various written histories of these facilities, and an examination of historic photographs would indicate that Marine Railways were in use by the end of the 1880's.<sup>10</sup> It would appear that the "machinery" refers to hand operated winches employing metal cables. At the beginning of the 1900's the motorized lifeboat was introduced; probably at that time (1904 - 1905), electric motors began to replace the hand operated winch system.<sup>11</sup> In the larger installations, the boathouses housed as many as three boats, providing high loft space with vertical winches to lift the boats from their rail cars. These boathouses were located either on land at the water's edge or placed on piles over the water as part of the dock and launching ramps. The lookout towers were sometimes placed atop the principal barracks or boathouses; in some cases they were treated as freestanding structures.

The first buildings constructed for the Life Saving Service were simple utilitarian structures visually suggesting the outbuildings which might be found accompanying any farm or urban residence. The first of the rescue facilities, constructed in 1848 at Spermaceti Cove, near Sandy Hook, New Jersey, was a wood-framed, shingled building measuring only sixteen by twenty-eight feet. Beginning in the late 1870's, the structures provided at the

rescue facilities were enlarged, and began to assume architectural pretenses. With a few exceptions, all of the facilities built between the 1870's and the 1930's borrowed their visual imagery from domestic architecture. The complex of buildings at each rescue facility conveyed the impression of an upper-middle-class suburban home. Yet, the addition of features such as a tall tower with clock faces at times implied a public rather than a private building.

The lifeboat stations of the late 1870's - 1880's usually featured a single building housing the boathouses, keeper's and crew's quarters, storage space for rescue equipment, and in many instances a lookout tower. Boathouses and keeper's quarters normally occupied the first floor, beneath the crew's quarters. Those early wooden buildings were usually sheathed in shingles, shiplap or clapboard.

The Eastlake style, employed in lifesaving stations of the late 1870's and early 1880's, was much modified by the Queen Anne and the then-emerging Colonial Revival styles. The buildings illustrated in M.J. Lamb's 1882 article "The American Life Saving Service" all basically embody Eastlake with Colonial Revival flavor.<sup>12</sup> The lifesaving station at Bay-Head, New Jersey, designed by Paul J. Pelz, combines Eastlake, Queen Anne and Colonial Revival design elements.<sup>13</sup> In California, the 1878 station at Golden Gate Park was clothed in similarly modified Eastlake garb. By the late 1880's suburban Colonial Revival dominated station architecture. On the West Coast the principal buildings at Fort Point and at Point Reyes were story-and-a-half, gambrel-roofed Colonial Revival structures; all of the buildings of the Arena Cove station were picturesque Colonial Revival designs. This tradition continued for new facilities and for buildings added to existing facilities during the 1920's and 1930's.<sup>14</sup> The advantages of the Colonial Revival tradition were several: it came to symbolize American nationalism; it convincingly suggested an anti-urban,



suburban middle-class environment; its simple detailing and plain white interior and exterior walls implied a nautical tradition.

In the late spring of 1878, the Golden Gate Park Station in San Francisco became the first lifeboat station built on the Pacific Coast.<sup>15</sup> This was followed later that year by the station at Humboldt Bay on the Northern California Coast. In 1881, on Bolinas Bay near Point Reyes, a third lifesaving station was established. This station, abandoned in 1885, was subsequently relocated and rebuilt in 1915. One by one, stations multiplied up and down the coast: by 1930 eight existed on the California Coast.<sup>16</sup> These included Southside, Golden Gate, Fort Point, Point Bonita, Bolinas Bay, Point Reyes, Arena Cove and Humboldt Bay.<sup>17</sup>

No detailed history of these California Rescue Stations has been written, so we cannot carefully trace the development of the facilities at each of these installations.<sup>18</sup> An examination of photographs and written sources indicates that Marine Railways and elaborations--launching ramps, docks and boathouses--were not built until after 1900. Marine railroad construction on the West Coast seems closely tied to the introduction of large, thirty-six-foot power rescue boats. The first of these was brought to the Humboldt Bay station in 1905, followed by the addition of a powerboat at Southside near San Francisco.<sup>19</sup> Somewhat earlier, in 1903, the shingle-covered boathouses at Arena Cove lifesaving station employed two pairs of rails upon which ran launching cars equipped with small roller-like wheels.<sup>20</sup>

As with the lifesaving Rescue Stations on the East and Gulf Coasts and the Great Lakes, the California stations were frequently rebuilt and moved to new locations. This was especially true after the introduction of the motor lifeboat which required a relatively quiet body of water for launching. The early stations at Golden Gate and Humboldt Bay placed their story-and-a-half

boathouses some distance from the water's edge. In design these boathouses were fundamentally late nineteenth-century carriage houses put to new uses. Functionally, the Golden Gate station featured a boathouse, a house for the keeper, a small one for the crew, and a water tower.<sup>21</sup> The Humboldt Bay station centered on a story-and-a-half, white shiplap-covered building housing two boats, quarters for surfmen and a lookout tower on the roof.<sup>22</sup>

The last of the completely rebuilt California lifeboat Rescue Stations, at Humboldt Bay, was constructed between 1936 and 1939. Its design is similar to the new station built at Point Arguello during the same period. The 1936-1939 Humboldt Bay facilities were organized within one structure. In the center stood a three-bay boathouse with launching ramp and double docks. Above the boathouse, the second floor held the crew's quarters; at the south end of the building stood the galley and day room; to the north, the officer in charge of the facility had his quarters.<sup>23</sup>

Prior to the construction of the Point Arguello Life Saving Station, facilities were located between San Francisco's Golden Gate and Humboldt Bay to the north; none had been built along the extensive coastline from San Francisco south to San Diego. This was due to the interconnected phenomena of the physical nature of the coastline, the development of urban centers along the coast, and the shipping patterns along California's Southern Coast. Other than at Monterey Bay, no sheltered natural harbor exists between San Francisco Bay and San Diego Bay. Semi-open roadsteads such as those at Port San Luis Obispo and at Santa Barbara lacked well-sheltered harbors. None of the coastal communities between San Pedro Bay (Los Angeles) and San Francisco established themselves as important coastal-oriented cities during the late nineteenth or early twentieth centuries. Docks were indeed built up and down the Southern Coast, and coastal traffic was substantial; but it never was as important

as that of the Northern California coast. The principal shipping lanes between San Francisco, San Pedro (an artificially-constructed harbor) and San Diego were held far out from the coast. These lanes only approached the coast at Point Arguello/Point Concepcion where the shoreline turned abruptly east. Traffic at this point usually moved between the Channel Islands and the mainland.

The most dangerous area in the southern shipping routes was the Point Arguello/Point Concepcion region.<sup>24</sup> Conditions at Point Arguello are characterized by rocky extensions protruding far out from the coast, powerful ocean currents, high and frequently-shifting winds, and seas plagued by heavy fog which can roll in without warning. Point Arguello received its name from Captain George Vancouver in 1793. He wrote of the place, "Another high, steep rocky point...rising very abruptly in rugged craggy cliffs."<sup>25</sup> He further noted that the coastline between Point Sal to the north and Point Arguello "...was destitute of wood, and nearly so of other vegetable production..."<sup>26</sup> Seventy years later H. Willis Baxley stated, "...and Point Arguella (sic) was passed at about five P.M., after which a low, sandy, and barren-looking shore at a four miles' distance was coasted for thirty-five miles to Point San Luis Obispo."<sup>27</sup>

The need for a lighthouse at Point Concepcion was recognized very early; and in 1855 one of stone was built on the high cliffs. Though Point Arguello "...better than Point Concepcion marks the meeting-point of ocean and channel," a lighthouse was not built at that point until 1901.<sup>28</sup> Later, in 1925, the small community of Arlight was established, in part to service the lighthouse.<sup>29</sup>

Between the years 1849 and 1933 there were nineteen major shipwrecks at or near Point Arguello. These were:

1849	April	-SS <u>Edith</u> ; beached in area of Point Arguello
1854	Sept. 20	-SS <u>Yankee Blade</u> ; aground off Point Arguello

1881		- <u>SS Julius R. Ray</u> ; lost off Point Concepcion
1886	May	- <u>SS Los Angeles</u> ; lost off Point Arguello
		- <u>Columbia</u> ; sank off Point Sal
1891		- <u>King James</u> ; caught fire, crew landed at Point Concepcion
1893	November	- <u>SS Gosford</u> ; caught fire, crew landed at Point Arguello
1905	June	- <u>SS Robert Sudden</u> ; lost between Surf and Santa Ynez River
1906		- <u>Shasta</u> ; lost off Point Concepcion
1909	January	- <u>SS Sybil Marston</u> ; sank south of Surf
1911	Feb. 7	- <u>SS Santa Rosa</u> ; aground off Point Pedernales
1917	June	- <u>McCullough</u> rammed and sank by <u>SS Governor</u> ; north of Point Concepcion
1923	September	- <u>SS Cuba</u> ; aground off San Miguel Island
	Sept. 7	-seven U.S. Navy Destroyers; aground off Point Pedernales
1926		- <u>Solano</u> ; aground north of Surf
		- <u>Orwaiti</u> ; aground off Point Sal
1931	May 30	- <u>SS Harvard</u> ; aground off Point Arguello
1933	May 28	- <u>SS Nippon Maru</u> ; aground off Point Pedernales
		- <u>Chehalis</u> ; aground at Cojo after collision with <u>J.D. Stetson</u>

The most severe and dramatic of these disasters was the grounding of seven U.S. Navy destroyers off Point Pedernales on September 7, 1923.<sup>30</sup> Although rescue equipment, including surf boats, were added to the Point Concepcion lighthouse previous to this disaster, the cliff-lined shore and high surf of the open Pacific limited their use. Taking into account the number of wrecks in and around Point Arguello/Point Concepcion waters, it is surprising that no lifeboat facilities appeared before the mid-1930's. The article "Naval Station Funds Ready," published in the July 11, 1935 Santa Barbara Morning

Press, mentions that the station had been "...long-planned," which would probably indicate that consideration had been given to the establishment of a facility near Point Arguello as early as the late 1920's,<sup>31</sup>

The remaining records of the Coast Guard in Washington do not provide us with any indication of how long discussions had been going on relative to the establishment of a station on the site. The first concrete evidence of action is a "Map of the Proposed Site", dated August 16, 1934. The 4.5-acre parcel upon which the facility was to be built was purchased for \$5,000 from the Sudden Ranch on July 22, 1935,<sup>32</sup> An examination of the coastal map of this region indicates that the selected site which lay approximately southeast of Point Arguello was the only feasible place to locate a rescue facility. The shore at this point turns briefly northward, then resumes an eastward extension; therefore, because of this curvature an open cove was provided. This site was near enough to Rocky Point, Point Arguello and Point Pedernales that rescue boats could reach a distressed vessel in reasonable time.

The site selected for the rescue facility was located on a section of the Santa Barbara coast which even today conveys the impression of an unpopulated, pastoral, Arcadian world. From Point Arguello east to approximately Ventura, the California coast is characterized by a narrow sloping bench which usually ends abruptly in a cliff at the coast. North of the rising bench are the Santa Ynez mountains. The bench itself is cut, usually quite deeply, by both large and small seasonal streams. While a few native as well as non-native trees are to be found in these arroyos and canyons, the lower mountain slope and the bench itself--the Coastal Sage Zone--are covered with grass and low vegetation. The utilization of the land for cattle grazing has appreciably increased the area covered with grass. Today, in 1980, a few stands of Monterey

cypress remain in the general area of the Point Arguello rescue facility. These stands were planted as windbreaks to protect the few ranch outbuildings originally situated in the area. In certain sections the beach is quite wide; in other cases it is almost nonexistent. Dramatic rock outcroppings jut into the water just off the coast from Jalama Beach (southeast of the rescue facility) northward past Point Pedernales.

The 1935 site plan, proposed by the U.S. Coast Guard Civil Engineering Office in Washington, D.C., located four buildings on the upper land shelf, while the boathouse, dock and launching ramp were situated sixty feet below. The upper shelf was designated to hold a cottage for the officer in charge, a dwelling, a garage and a flag tower. Although a road, walkways, cistern and the steps leading down to the boathouse were detailed, no mention was made of the road to the beach nor of the breakwater.

Both the Santa Barbara Morning Press and the Lompoc Record carried stories on July 11th and 12th of 1935 reporting that \$103,205 had been approved by the Works Allocation Board in Washington, D.C. for the construction of the Point Arguello lifeboat facility.<sup>33</sup> On the 26th of November, 1935, a request for bids was sent to fifteen northern and southern Californian construction firms. They were asked to bid on the plans and specifications which were sent to them for the two-and-a-half-story and basement Headquarters/Barracks Building and a story-and-a-half garage.<sup>34</sup> A second request for bids was sent out sometime that November for the drilling of a deep well and the construction of a water system.<sup>35</sup> Another problem to be overcome for the projected facility was the need for a twenty-mile, all-weather road, since the existing ranch road was impassable during parts of the winter months.<sup>36</sup>

## Headquarters/Barracks Building

An announcement of the award for bid for the Headquarters/Barracks Building and Garage Building was published in the Lompoc Record on December 20, 1935.<sup>37</sup> The contract for construction was awarded to the Everett Building Company of Lompoc, a firm which does not seem to have been among those originally solicited. The allocation for the project was \$42,643, and a contract was signed February 3, 1936.<sup>38</sup> It was announced that employees of the Everett Company would receive much of their material via the nearby Southern Pacific Railroad, and that they would set up their tents and camp at the site.<sup>39</sup>

The working drawings of the Headquarters/Barracks Building, dated November 1, 1935, called for a two-and-a-half story gable roof structure which in its general form and detail is a good example of the Colonial revival style of the decade of the 1920's. The main block of this white shingled building (46'-0" X 32'-0") has a centrally placed open porch (28'-0" X 9'-0") and entrance facing to the south. Balanced paired windows occur to each side of the entrance on both the first and second floors, with a single window placed above the center entrance door. A group of three dormers with arched windows are situated in both the south and north roof plane of the gable roof. Two balanced one-story wings (15'-0" X 17'-0") project off of the east and west ends of the building. Each of the east and west facades of the main block and the single story ends of the wings contained balanced arrangements of windows and dormers, with the exception of the ground level entrance, which, with its small bracketed supported gable roofed hood is

slightly off center. The two-story block, its south porch and two wings have been placed on a high (3'-8") poured concrete foundation. The foundation embraces a full basement which is lighted by large windows at the end of each of the wings, and by a number of characteristic narrow horizontal basement windows. A single brick chimney arises just south of the west ridge of the main roof. The building displays the usual array of details that we associate with the Colonial revival domestic buildings of the decade of the 1920's. These consist of wide (7½" exposed) shingled sidings, a suggestion of corner engaged piers, 12-light double hung windows, operating louvered shutters, round headed windows in each of the dormers and within each of the two-and-a-half story gable ends (each with their own centrally-placed wooden key in the arch), and prominent metal downspouts with their straps and collection boxes embellishing the principal facades. Also characteristic of the Colonial revival is the porch, the flat roof of which is supported by paired groupings of wooden (Tuscan) columns and corner piers. A wooden railing surrounds the flat roof of the porch, while a wrought-iron railing, with a central geometric design, has been placed between the pairs of columns. The iron railing is carried down on each side of the wide entrance steps.

The interior space of the Administration and Barracks buildings conveys the feeling on both of the two principal floors that a classic central hall plan of a domestic dwelling has been modified for other purposes. The first floor houses a central entrance hall, with stairs



off to the west, a rear entrance hall, with stairs descending to a ground level landing and entrance, and then down to the basement level. To the east of the rear and front central halls are located the dining hall and kitchen. West of the central hall are several smaller rooms (plus lavatory facilities) which were probably used as offices. The second floor houses a large single dormitory to the east, a central lavatory-bathroom, and two separated bedrooms to the west. The fully finished attic contained a variety of specialized storage spaces. The finished, light and airy basement houses a central heating system, a cold storage room, a laundry and other storage areas. The interior of the building conveys a ship-like (almost Shaker-like) quality--with extensive built-ins, simple prominent hardware, lack of any ornamental detailing, and a very simple detailing of the doors, framing and other details. Construction-wise, the building is a wood-sheathed, wood frame structure, with the interior walls sheathed in lath and plaster. A ship-like quality is conveyed by the floors (with the exception of the basement) which are covered in linoleum. The roof of the main building and the two wings are of traditional wood shingles.

That the domestic image was what the Coast Guard had in mind is revealed

in the story about the awarding of the contract reported in the Lompoc Record of December 20, 1935. The building was described as a "two story Residence" with basement, which included a large dormitory for about twelve beds, and three small bedrooms.<sup>40</sup>

The accompanying Garage unit provided one more element to help convey the sense that the Rescue facility was domestic, not governmental. It was situated on the northwest corner of the property, with the gate adjacent to it, and the road to the Residence going by its south facade. This is just the way that a gate house/service building would have been located on a suburban estate. The working drawings for the garage structure are dated November 1, 1935--the same date indicated for the Headquarters/Barracks Building drawings.

The Everett firm commenced work on the project on February 21, 1936.<sup>41</sup> The Lompoc Record published several stories on the construction of the Headquarters/Barracks Building and Garage in the months that followed.<sup>42</sup> On November 27th, 1936, the Lompoc Record announced that the "Coast Guard Station Nears Completion; Crew is Due."<sup>43</sup> On December 25, 1936 an announcement was made in the paper that the Point Arguello Rescue Station was "officially opened."<sup>44</sup>

At the same time that construction was proceeding with the Headquarters/Barracks Building and Garage Building, a contract was let on March 12, 1936 to Lyon Brothers of Los Angeles to dig the deep water well.<sup>45</sup> The question of the need for an all-weather road continued to be debated, primarily because the County of Santa Barbara, rather than the Federal government, would have to pay the cost of its construction.<sup>46</sup> Neither the U.S. Coast Guard records in Washington, D.C. nor the Lompoc Record reveal when the road was actually started and finished. An article in the Lompoc Record of January 8, 1937,

noted that the "County to Start Surf-Honda Road," A lease for a Right of Way from Arlight to the Point Arguello Coast Guard Station was signed on May 11, 1938, and the paved road was at long last completed on October 18, 1940.<sup>47</sup>

### The Breakwater

As indicated the necessity for an artificial harbor protected by an artificial breakwater was envisioned from the beginning of the project. Although mention has been made of a Breakwater formed of rocks, the first scheme was for a "Construction of Cellular Type Steel Sheets Pile Breakwater"; the plans and specifications for which were published on June 16, 1936, under the signature of P. Julian Latham, Senior Civil Engineer, U.S. Coast Guard.<sup>48</sup> The request for Bids went out on July 8, 1936, but the Breakwater plans were recalled in October, 1936.<sup>49</sup> It would appear that the proposed steel platepile Breakwater was both too expensive and too difficult to construct in the rough waters off of the Station. The Lompoc Record wrote that the original scheme was withdrawn because of the "...failure to obtain bids for fitted one-ton rocks protected by steel pilings."<sup>50</sup> The second design for the Breakwater was of conventional rock fill design. It would appear that bids were sought on the second Breakwater in July 1938. Funds, to the sum of \$125,000 were to be provided this time by the P.W.A. (the Works Projects Administration).<sup>51</sup> Only two bids were received for the project; one from Shannahan Brothers of Huntington Park for \$186,620; the other from Rohl-Connelly Company of Los Angeles. The Rohl-Connelly bid of \$165,000 was officially accepted on August 11, 1938.<sup>52</sup> In mid-October, the contractor started work on the site with a fifteen-man work crew and one-ton-plus granite rocks for the Breakwater were being shipped by boat from the Los Angeles area.<sup>53</sup>

W.P.A.

The four-hundred-and-fifty-foot Breakwater was completed on February 10, 1939, and the Coast Guard took official custody on March 21, 1939.<sup>54</sup>

The rock-filled Breakwater was an "L-shaped" structure measuring 275'-11 2/32" by 229'-11 3/32". The open angle of the two sections is 116°. The Breakwater was constructed of large quarry-cut rough blocks of granite which were set directly on the bedrock floor of the cove. The design of the Breakwater within the cove is such that it provides a markedly well-sheltered small harbor.

#### The Boathouse, Dock, Launching Platform and Marine Railway

Before the Breakwater was started, construction commenced on the Boathouse, Dock, Launching Ramp, Marine Railroad in the cove, and on the Flag Tower. The working drawings for all but the tower are dated May 5, 1937. A request for bids was probably sent out in June, 1937, to twenty-nine bidders. As with the later bidding for the construction of the Breakwater, only two bids were received; one from Bennett and Taylor of Los Angeles for \$130,000; The other by Shannahan Brothers of Los Angeles for \$105,000, which was accepted.<sup>55</sup> Construction of the buildings, dock, launching ramp and Marine Railway started in late August of 1937. A construction crew of fifteen to twenty-five men first had to build the road from the upper shelf of land (where the Headquarters/Barracks Building was situated) to the bench, before work could begin on the dock and launchway.<sup>56</sup> The fact that the Breakwater had not yet been built made the construction of the dock, launchway, Boathouse and Marine Railroad difficult. We are not certain of the precise date of completion, but it would appear that these structures were finished in late March, 1938: the Lompoc Record noted on February 18, 1938, that the launchway would be completed "...late next month."<sup>57</sup>

Both water service and electricity were eventually brought onto the deck. The water piping was for normal plumbing needs within the Boathouse, for spigots to wash the boats, and for fire fighting apparatus. Electricity for the dock and boathouse was at first provided by an independent generator which serviced interior lighting needs of the Boathouse and the seven light posts placed on the edges of the dock.<sup>58</sup> The correspondence in the U.S. Coast Guard records in Washington indicate that these electrical plants were not reliable; sometime after January 1939, they were discarded and replaced by a new line to the station which connected the facility to the power lines of the Southern California Edison Company.<sup>59</sup> The hoist engine operating the Marine Railroad cars was a gasoline-powered "donkey engine."<sup>60</sup> The 1944 Inventory lists it as a Hercules single-drum unit, serial number 663785. The clutch system of the accompanying winch was manufactured by the O.K. Clutch and Machinery Company of Columbia, Pennsylvania.<sup>61</sup> As it presently exists the large Hercules winch and motor would appear to have been connected by cable to only the launching carriage at the northeast side of the Boathouse. In the center was a second gasoline-powered engine and winch which it seems was connected to the central launching carriage and to the one at the southwest side of the Boathouse.

The working drawings for the Boathouse and Launching Ramp depict three sets of rails for the launching of three boats. The rails cross over one another and converge, running parallel down the launching ramp. This design eliminated the need for a switching mechanism; each boat could be launched without having to be switched to a common track. The rails for the trackage were the common A.R.A. H70 type. The paired rails were 5'-8 5/8", center to center.

The original working drawings picture the three launching carriages for

As it presently stands, the deck and launching platform do not fully mirror the detailed working drawings of 1937. These drawings depict the Boathouse in the center of a wide (57'-0") dock, with a narrow entrance dock leading to the center of the wide portion of the dock directly in front of the entrance to the Boathouse. In addition, a walkway is shown on both sides of the Boathouse. Both the narrow extension of the dock into the Harbor and the slanted launching ramp accomodating the Marine Railroad were designed as far more substantial structures than presently exist. At least in part, we must assume that major modifications were made on an additional set of drawings which we do not possess. The working drawings depicting the general configuration of the dock and ramp as they presently stand are dated as early as 1938.

The main portion of the dock has been placed high (approximately 16'-0") above the mean high tide water line. This portion of the dock is supported on thirty-one caissons, each sunk to bedrock and each six feet in diameter. The round caissons consist of a quarter-of-an-inch-thick cylindrical steel shell filled with concrete and reinforcing steel rods. The narrow dock extension was supported by eight rectangular wood cribs; the entrance dock was supported by seven sets of timber posts set upon seven reinforced concrete foundation piers. The seven piers were in turn tied together at the top by a continuous horizontal reinforced-concrete beam. The deck of the dock was basically flat from the land side of the entrance dock to the top of the launching ramp; at this point the narrow extension dock ramps down to a level approximately four feet lower than the main deck.

The timbering wood in the dock structure was substantial. The horizontal beams resting on the caissons were 12" X 16" beams. On top of these were beams which varied from 12" X 14" to 4" X 14". The decking itself was composed of planking 3" thick by 6" wide.

the three pairs of rails were connected by metal cables to a single winch (with intervening system of pulleys). The original intent of having one winch and motor for the three launching carriages was never carried out, or the system was changed at a later date. With the dating of the winches, motors and clutch equipment fixing their manufacture in 1936-1937, it is most likely that the idea of having two engines was substituted during construction. The advantage of the two engines was that the extensive system of pulleys needed was substantially reduced, and the launching carriages which held the thirty-six foot Motor Life Boat was the only one serviced by the larger motor.

The working drawings of the Boathouse show three boats in their stored position on their launching carriages. Two of these were to be thirty-six-foot long Motor Life Boats and one a twenty-six foot surf boat. A newspaper account of February 18, 1938, said that three boats were expected in early May. These were a thirty-eight foot motorized life boat, and two smaller boats, one with a motor.<sup>62</sup> A 1944 Inventory of the Rescue facility lists the following:

38' X 8' motor lifeboat, purchased in 1938

25' X 10' motor surfboat, purchased in 1938

25' X 10' surfboat, purchased in 1938

18' X 2½' dory, purchased in 1937<sup>63</sup>

It would appear therefore that the Boathouse never housed the specific boats indicated in the original working drawings. Another mystery: was the 11' X 4' metal life car, which was to have been suspended from the ceiling in the rear of the Boathouse, ever present at the facility? No mention is made of it in the 1944 Inventory; nor is its use mentioned in the logs of the facility.<sup>64</sup>

The Boathouse, like other buildings at the facility, is in the Colonial revival style of the 1920's. It is a wide shingled structure covered by a low-pitched hipped roof (46'-0" X 62'-0"). The southeast facade of the building contains three large openings which give access to the interior for the storage of two small (26' length) and one large (37' length) rescue boats. The three 14'-0" wide doorways can be closed by upward acting doors. The three doors are disposed of in a symmetrical fashion with one in the center and one to each side. The facades of the two long flanks of the building house five 12-paned double hung windows which are also disposed of in a balanced fashion. The northwest facade centers on a small classical composition of a narrow (3'-2") porch, supported by two thin double-paired piers; within the porch a paneled door with side lights complete the classic composition. Single balanced windows occur at both sides of the entrance. The hipped roof boasts four low-pitched gable dormers, with hinged triangular-shaped windows within, and a small low louvered cupola situated on the ridge.

Within the Boathouse the 14'-0" high space contains 30' of marine railroad tracks for each of the three boats. At the rear, adjacent to the northwest wall are several storage closets and a lavatory. A free-standing, steep narrow wooden stairs leads to a low attic space,<sup>65</sup> The structure of the Boathouse is wood frame, externally sheathed in shingles, and internally with 3/4" plywood. No internal decorative elements are present. Externally, in addition to the entrance, the windows are treated in a "Colonial" fashion, and suggestions of engaged piers occur on each of the four corners of the building.

#### The Garage

Mention has already been made of the Garage which was designed and built



at the same time as the main Headquarters/Barracks Building. The Garage structure is located just north of the entrance gate. This story-and-a-half white shingled unit measures 45'-0" X 28'-0". Four identical uplifting garage doors form a symmetrical composition on the south facade; above are four small roof dormers. The proportions of these dormers, and the detailing of their round arched windows with their wood keystones match those of the Administration and Barracks building. The north facade of the Garage displays four balanced windows and four dormers identical to those found on the south facade. The west facade, with its gable end, contains three windows, and above a round arched window occupies the gable. The east facade is similar, except that the southern-most window has been eliminated and replaced by a Colonial revival glass and paneled door and a gabled hood, supported by brackets (similar to those on the rear entrance of the Administration and Barracks building).

Within the Garage, space is provided for two trucks and two passenger cars. At the northwest corner is a 12'-0" X 8'-0" pump room (for water from a deep well). Near the center of the open Garage space, adjacent to the north wall, is an open "L-shaped" stairway which provides access to the attic space. All of the Colonial revival details revealed on the exterior of the building match those of the main buildings, except that they tend to be miniaturized. The building is wood frame, externally sheathed in shingles, internally with lath and plaster. Corner engaged piers are provided, and operating shutters were used for all of the lower 12-paned double hung windows. "Correctly" designed metal downspouts with their support strips, and the prominent dormers all add up to a convincing Colonial revival image. Originally a wood sign "U.S. Coast Guard Point Arguello Station" was placed above the center two garage-door openings.

### The Lookout Tower and Watch House

The working drawings for this building were produced on May 5, 1935, and were then revised on February 4, 1937. The request for bids for this building went out on May 19, 1937. Four bids were received; that of Fred J. Early, Jr. of San Francisco was accepted on June 26, 1937.<sup>66</sup> The Tower was completed early in 1938 and was officially established as operational on the 11th of March, 1938.<sup>67</sup> The Tower was placed on axis to the center of the south facade of the Administration and Barracks Building. It was situated one hundred feet south of the main entrance porch and was connected to the main building by a concrete walkway. The Tower consisted of a small hipped-roof box (measuring 8'-11 1/8" X 8'-11 1/8"). This boxlike building was mounted upon a four-legged steel frame. The floor of the Tower was approximately 24'-6" above the ground. A steep metal ladder staircase led from the ground up to the interior of the Tower. A trap door in the floor covered the opening above the ladder. A steel platform extended out at floor level, running parallel to the Tower's south side, and partially along both the east and west sides of the Tower house. The open steel tripod support for the Tower was provided by the Bethlehem Steel Company at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. It would appear that the contract for the steel tripod support was separate from the Tower's.

### Water Treatment Building

The history of the Water Treatment Building at the station poses a number of unanswered questions. The contract for a deep water well apparently was let in either December, 1935, or in January, 1936.<sup>68</sup> The next document to refer to

the water supply, a set of working drawings dated April 15, 1938, depict an octagonal Wellhouse measuring crossaxially 16'-0" X 16'-0". Above the Wellhouse was a 10,000-gallon wood water tank supported by four metal supports. For some reason, this scheme was not followed, for the existing Wellhouse is a simple rectangular gabled roof building which is located 87'-0" east of the Garage Building. This structure is sheathed in wood shingles, and all of its detailing reflects the other buildings at the facility. It seems reasonable to assume that this building was built sometime in later 1938 or 1939. The 10,000-gallon water tank depicted on the 1938 drawings was built; it is mentioned in a 1958 Inventory of the improvements of the facility.<sup>69</sup>

#### The Flag Tower

The Inventory of February 24, 1944, of the improvements at the Station list a Flag Tower, giving date of construction as 1936.<sup>70</sup> The 1958 Inventory indicates a 60'-0" steel skeleton Flag Tower at the Facility.<sup>71</sup> Neither the local paper nor the U.S. Coast Guard records in Washington provide us with information as to the precise date it was built, or who built it.<sup>72</sup> This Tower is still standing, and is located on axis in front of the Headquarters/Barracks Building. The Lookout Tower, now gone, must have stood between the main building and the Flag Tower.

#### Other Pre - 1941 Structures

The substantial wood fence surrounding most of the site was built in 1938.<sup>73</sup> The concrete walkway leading to the top of the stairs which descend to the Boathouse was constructed in 1936. (The wood stairs were built in 1938

as part of the Boathouse contract). The walkway from the Headquarters/Barracks Building was part of the 1937 contract for the Lookout Tower. Other concrete walkways around the main building were built in 1940.

Probably from the initial planning of the Point Arguello Station it was assumed that a separate Officer in Charge Building would form part of the complex. The first mention of this cottage is contained in an Invitation For Bids dated May 19, 1937. A single bid by Fred J. Early, Jr. of San Francisco for \$26,900 was rejected as too costly.<sup>74</sup> The location and general outline of the proposed building are contained in the drawings submitted for "Application for Permit for Construction of Boathouse and Launchway", dated June 8, 1937.<sup>75</sup> This drawing shows a good-sized structure which would most likely have been a single story wood building, similar in design to the Headquarters/Barracks Building and Garage Building.<sup>76</sup>

#### Post - 1941 Additions to the Point Arguello Station

During the Second World War several buildings were added to the site to accomodate military operations in 1943 and 1944. These drawings, dated May 4, 1943, and February 21, 1944, as well as a plot plan of 1944 indicate the following additional buildings:

- (a) Four cottages in an east/west row situated outside of the north fence (behind the Garage Building)
- (b) A group of five small structures just inside the gate, to the south of the road. These are labelled Refrigeration building, kennels, store building, platform, and dog food storage
- (c) A long single-story Barracks building, located south

of the entrance road

- (d) A second Garage Building measuring 24'-0" X 100'-0" was located south of the kennels and dog food storage building

None of these temporary buildings indicated on the drawings are still in existence, but there is every reason to believe that they were built. The 1958 Inventory lists some of these buildings plus others which, with the exception of the Refrigeration building located at the northeast corner of the Headquarters/Barracks Building, no longer exist. These include:

- (a) Barracks building, measuring 20'-0" X 70'-0"
- (b) Garage building, measuring 25'-0" X 100'-0"
- (c) Refrigeration building
- (d) Paint Locker building
- (e) Fire House<sup>77</sup>

The most recent addition to the Point Arguello Station was a "Vertical Radiator Guyed Type" steel tower which was erected either late in 1955 or early in 1956.<sup>78</sup> This one-hundred-and-thirty-foot open metal work stabilized with guide wires is triangular in shape. It is adjacent to the older Flag Tower, south of the Headquarters/Barracks Building. Sometime in the mid- to late-1950's a helicopter pad was constructed southwest of the Headquarters/Barracks Building.

#### The Architecture of the U.S. Coast Guard Buildings at Point Arguello

The Colonial Revival style utilized in the design of the buildings within the compound comprise a fascinating image. Though the Colonial Revival style has

been continually employed in California from the 1890's to the present, it was never so prevalent here as it was in the East, Midwest or South.<sup>79</sup> One can suggest a variety of reasons which would prompt a Federal agency such as the U.S. Coast Guard to use this particular Period revival style. Historically, the late 18th and early 19th Century Colonial styles (ranging from the Pre-Georgian to the Federal styles) were closely associated with New England, and symbolically, New England in turn suggested an involvement with the sea, and also with rigorous puritanism. The forthright plain-ness of white-painted interior plaster walls and woodwork has a distinct quality of association with the ship and life aboard the ship. An additional outward advantage of maintaining the same architectural image regardless of geographic locale is that everyone would be able to respond in a similar fashion to a complex such as this--we would be aware that it was naval and Federal.

The specific use of Colonial Revival forms of the 1920's for a complex built in the 1930's, plus the implied suggestion that this is an upper middle class country estate, provide two other comments on the practice of architecture during these decades. First, it indicates a tendency for in-house governmental architecture to generally lag behind whatever happens to be the latest architectural vogue. Second, it demonstrates the circumscribed limitations of imagery which always face a designer. The small scale of a facility such as at Point Arguello (plus other considerations: economic, etc.) meant that its imagery would most logically be derived from a domestic source. And if it were to be domestic, and situated in the open country, the most logical source would be that of a country estate. There are of course ironies involved in this; the employment of the image of an upper middle class country estate which by implication characterizes the wealthy laissez faire world of the twenties, being used for a quasi-military installation, built during the great Depression of the 1930's, creates a rather deeply built-in contradiction.

In and of themselves none of the existing buildings at Point Arguello could be considered of major architectural significance. Nonetheless, the site itself is of real architectural significance for two reasons:

- (1) As an illustration of a Federal government interpretation of a style --in this case the Colonial Revival;
- (2) The transformation of a mode employed in country houses or suburban architecture of the teens and twenties, into a utilitarian complex, which should at least in part be read as a ship on land.

Finally, the Marine Railroad used to launch and retrieve the Rescue boats situated between the interior of the Boathouse and the lower (water) end of the launching platform represents an important engineering feature which was formerly common on the West Coast, but now is almost extinct.

The Coast Guard Rescue Station at Point Arguello became officially operational on December 17, 1936, when Lt. Benedict R. Mess, one junior officer and seven surfmen were attached to the station.<sup>80</sup> The Lompoc Record noted on November 27, 1936, that a forty-foot boat, together with truck trailer, had been brought to the site from San Francisco.<sup>81</sup> The only buildings completed at this time were the Headquarters/Barracks Building and the Garage Building. The main building contained a barracks room, Officer's Quarters, dining hall, galley, recreation room "...and other necessary rooms."<sup>82</sup> At first the boats including the thirty-eight foot ~~motor~~ rescue boat had to be launched directly into the surf, east of the facility. Even when the Boathouse was finished, it was difficult to launch the boats from the Marine Railway until the Breakwater was completed in 1939. From December 17, 1936, until December 31, 1941, the Point Arguello station was administered by a succession of four officers. These were Benedict R. Mess, William E. Peterson, Herbert Wilbur and W.L. Scanboroug (sp.?). The complement of station personnel varied between nine and seventeen men. The logs themselves

reveal that activities of the station were generally quiet between 1936 and 1941. The two most important incidents were the sinking of the SS Lone Eagle after it collided with the USS Crosby off Point Arguello in April, 1941, and the grounding of SS Iowan at Government Point on June 13, 1941.<sup>83</sup> Boats from the Point Arguello station were sent out in both of these instances. In the case of the grounding of the SS Iowan, the Santa Barbara News Press on June 13, 1941 reported that "... the /Coast Guard Cutter\_7 Perseus and motor launches from Point Arguello Coast Guard station were standing by."<sup>84</sup>

With the entrance of the United States into the Second World War on December 7, 1941, the situation drastically changed for the Point Arguello station. On December 21, 1941 a Japanese submarine attacked the cargo ship Emidio off of Point Arguello, but there is no mention that any boats were dispatched from the Point Arguello station.

In the last month of normal operation, on December 26, 1941, Lt. W.L. Scanboroug (sp.), the Commanding Officer, reported that the "...1st and 3rd Platoons of Company M-160 Infantry moved in on the Reservation."<sup>85</sup> And the last entry in the station's log books notes that there were now sixteen Coast Guard personnel at the station, and thirty-four enlisted men of the U.S. Army.<sup>86</sup>

The Coast Guard continued to operate the station during the Second World War, though its use was more as a Coastal Defense base for nearby Camp Cooke than as a Rescue Station. On September 8, 1952, the Point Arguello station was officially disestablished; and on February 10, 1958, the station was transferred to the U.S. Navy.<sup>87</sup> In May of 1958, South Camp Cooke, which included the former Coast Guard station at Point Arguello, was commissioned as the Naval Missile Facility, Point Arguello. On July 1, 1964, the Naval Missile Facility at Point Arguello was transferred to the U.S. Air Force. Two years later Vandenberg Air Force Base acquired the Sudden Ranch from the Sudden Estate Company,



## NOTES

1. Kensil Bell, Always Ready: The Story of the United States Coast Guard (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1944), pp. 181-182.
2. Ibid., pp. 183-184.
3. Darrell Hevenor Smith and Fred Wilbur Powell, The Coast Guard, Its History, Activities and Organization (Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1929), pp. 30-37.
4. By 1915 there was also one inland station, situated on the Ohio River near Louisville, Kentucky. See Kensil Bell, op. cit., p. 187.
5. The Encyclopedia Britannica (Chicago: R.S. Peale Co., 1892), pp. 572-573.
6. Kensil Bell, op. cit., p. 189.
7. Oliver M. Maxam, "The Life Saving Stations of the United States Coast Guard," U.S. Naval Institute Proceedings 55 (May 1929), p. 375.
8. Darrell Hevenor Smith and Fred Wilbur Powell, op. cit., p. 35.
9. Anon., "Life Saving Services of the United States," American Architect and Building News 16 (September 13, 1884), p. 174.
10. T.S.A. Freeman, "United States Life Saving Service," American Catholic Quarterly Review 18 (July 1893), pp. 660-666; G.E. Goss, Life Saving (New York: Associated Press, 1916).
11. Howard V.L. Bloomfield, The Compact History of the United States Coast Guard (New York: Hawthorn Books, Inc., 1966), p. 125.
12. M.J. Lamb, "The American Life Saving Service," Harper's New Monthly Magazine 64 (February 1882), pp. 357-373.
13. Illustrated in the American Architect and Building News 16 (September 15, 1884).
14. An exception to the almost universal use of Colonial Revival architecture

was the 1940 station of Cleveland, Ohio, which was Streamline Moderne in style. See Kensil Bell, op. cit., pl. 10, after p. 190.

15. Ralph C. Shanks, Jr., "The United States Life Saving Service in California," Sea Letter of the San Francisco Maritime Museum 27 (Spring 1977), p. 5; -----, and Janetta Thompson Shanks, Lighthouses and Lifeboats on the Redwood Coast (San Anselmo: Costano Books, 1978), p. 160.

16. Darrell Hevenor Smith and Fred Wilbur Powell, op. cit., p. 123; Raymond J. Wilker, "On California Coast," The U.S. Coast Guard Magazine 4 (October 1931), pp. 22-24.

17. All of these California stations and those of the southern Oregon coast were administered by the District Commander of the Twelfth District with its headquarters at San Francisco.

18. The library of the San Francisco Maritime Museum, San Francisco, contains archival material relating to the history of rescue stations on the West Coast.

19. Ralph C. Shanks, Jr., op. cit., pp. 3-4, and Janetta Thompson Shanks, op. cit., p. 179.

20. Ibid., p. 82.

21. Ralph C. Shanks, Jr., op. cit., p. 4.

22. Ibid., p. 181. The single-story shed-roofed section of the building which accomodated the second boat may have been a later addition. The date of construction of the launching ramp is not known.

23. Ralph C. Shanks, Jr., and Janetta Thompson Shanks, op. cit., pp. 185 and 190.

24. James Schermerhorn, "Arguello - Concepcion Dangerous Headland," Noticias 5 No. 3 (Santa Barbara Historical Society, Fall 1959), pp. 17-22.

25. Marguerite Eyer Wilbur, ed., Vancouver in California 1792-1794 1 (Los Angeles: Glen Dawson, 1953), p. 143.

- 1852 March 2 - Isaac J. Sparks sells Rancho la Espada to Gaspar Orena for \$3,000
- 1867 Nov. 12 - Gaspar Orena sells Rancho la Espada to Thomas B. Dibblee for \$78,900
- 1868 Oct. 29 - W.W. Hollister buys into Thomas and Albert Dibblee holdings; one-half interest in Rancho la Espada, Nuestra Senora del Refugio, San Julian, Canada de Salsipuedes, and Las Cruces.
- 1879 May 15 - Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors grant franchise to Dibblees and Hollister for construction and maintenance of wharf, about 3 3/4 miles east of Point Arguello; to benefit and improve value of the land.
- Robert Sudden agrees to construct and maintain wharf on parcel of Rancho la Espada;
- A second wharf said to have been built at Point Arguello during the late 1880's;
- Both reportedly impractical; steamers refuse to land due to rough water;
- 1879 Aug. 13 - Dibblees and Hollister deed of partition. Hollister receives Rancho la Espada and Canada de Salsipuedes. Excluded from Rancho la Espada is grant to U.S.A. for lighthouse and parcel for wharf.
- 1883 Jan. 19 - Subdivision map of Rancho la Espada filed with Santa Barbara County Surveyor Office. Subdivided into 13 lots by W.H. Norway in December 1882; 11,040 acres total.
- 1883 Jan. 25 - Robert Sudden buys lots number 1 (location of Point Arguello), 7,8,9,10,11,12.

33. "Naval Station Funds Ready," Santa Barbara Morning Press (July 11, 1935), p. 3; "Naval Station Fund Allotted - Coast Guard Station at Concepcion," Lompoc Record (July 12, 1935), p. 1.

26. Ibid., p. 143.
27. H. Willis Baxley, What I Saw on the West Coast of South and North America and of the Hawaiian Islands (New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1865).
28. Stanley Wood, Over the Range to the Golden Gate. Revised by C.E. Hooper (Chicago: R.R. Donnelley & Sons, 1908), p. 234.
29. The "town" of Arlight was abandoned on September 6, 1935.
30. For the disaster of the seven destroyers see New York Times (September 11, 1923), p. 1:1; New York Times (September 12, 1923), p. 1:5.
31. "Naval Station Funds Ready," Santa Barbara Morning Press (July 11, 1935), p.3. The Lompoc Record (July 12, 1935), p.1 also indicates that the funds allotted for the project were to be used to construct the "...long-planned Point Arguello Coast Guard Station."
32. The site for the Point Arguello Rescue Facility was surveyed by the Santa Barbara engineering firm of Grant and Evans. At the time of purchase the land was owned by the Sudden Estate Company. The 4.5 acres were composed of two parcels of subdivided lot 1, Rancho la Espada. The site is a rectangle measuring 425' X 400'. The history of land ownership of the site follows:
  - 1787 Establishment of Mission La Purisima Concepcion. Land that had been under the sovereignty of Spain, Point Arguello being a part of, now came under the jurisdiction of the Mission.
  - 1837 May 10 - Rancho Punta de la Concepcion granted to Anastacio Carrillo. The eighth grant made in Santa Barbara County; from the secularized holdings of Mission La Purisima Concepcion. 24,992 acres confirmed July 13, 1863.
  - 1851 Oct. 13 - In partition of Rancho Punta de la Concepcion, Anastacio Carrillo sells Rancho la Espada to Isaac J. Sparks. Approximately three leagues for \$2,400.

34. U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.: National Archives), Record Group 26.
35. "Water Supply for Arguello Station," Lompoc Record (December 13, 1935), p. 1.
36. "President Approves Coast Guard Station," Lompoc Record (July 19, 1935), p. 1, also discusses the need for a new Lifeboat Rescue Facility and for existing lighthouse.
37. "Bid for Building New Coast Guard Station Awarded," Lompoc Record (December 20, 1935), pp. 1 and 5.
38. U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.: National Archives), Record Group 26. The principal in the Everett Building Company who signed the contract was A.D. Everett.
39. Lompoc Record (December 20, 1935), pp. 1 and 5.
40. Ibid., pp. 1 and 5.
41. "New Coast Guard Station Started," Lompoc Record (February 21, 1936), p. 1.
42. Lompoc Record (July 17, 1936), p. 1; Lompoc Record (October 10, 1936), p. 1; Lompoc Record (November 27, 1936), p. 1.
43. "Coast Guard Station Nears Completion; Crew is Due," Lompoc Record (November 27, 1936), p. 1. The article noted that the buildings were to be completed within a few days, and the painters were nearly through.
44. "New Coast Guard Station is Model of Compactness; is Officially Opened," Lompoc Record (December 25, 1936), p. 1.
45. U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.: National Archives), Record Group 26; The Lompoc Record reported that the "...drilling to be undertaken soon..." and that bids had been called for and would be "...opened this week," (December 13, 1935), p. 1.
46. Lompoc Record (July 19, 1935), p. 1; Lompoc Record (December 20, 1935), p. 1; Lompoc Record (March 13, 1936), p. 1; Lompoc Record (November 27, 1936), p. 1.
47. Lompoc Record (January 8, 1937), p. 1; U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.: National Archives), Record Group 26.
48. The Lompoc Record mentions a "rock barrier" type of breakwater in articles on the Rescue Facility (July 12, 1935), p. 1; (July 19, 1935), p. 1; Information relating to the Cellular type steel sheet pile breakwater is contained in the

U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.; National Archives), Record Group 26, A request for bids was published in the United States Government Advertiser and elsewhere.

49. Lompoc Record (July 17, 1936), p. 1; Lompoc Record (October 16, 1936), p. 1.

50. Lompoc Record (July 17, 1936), p. 1. The November 27, 1936 Lompoc Record mentioned that "Bids on Breakwater Opened Recently But Rejected." They ranged between \$117,000 and \$175,000.

51. "Breakwater Project at Point Arguello is PWA Project," Lompoc Record (July 1, 1938), p. 1.

52. U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.; National Archives), Record Group 26. The Lompoc Record (October 14, 1936), p. 1 mentions that the contract was for \$135,000, which would be \$30,000 less than the Rohl-Connelly bid, and \$10,000 more than the mentioned \$125,000 PWA Funding.

53. "Contractors Start Work on Coast Guard Breakwater," Lompoc Record (October 14, 1935), p. 1; Lompoc Record (October 21, 1938), p. 1; Lompoc Record (December 9, 1938), p. 1.

54. "450-Foot Breakwater at New Coast Guard Station Completed," Lompoc Record (February 10, 1939), p. 1; U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.; National Archives), Record Group 26.

55. Ibid., no p. given. C.E. Shannahan was President and N.S. Shannahan was Treasurer of Shannahan Brothers, Inc. Their office address at this time was 406 South Main Street, Los Angeles; "Contracts for Completion of Coast Guard Station Let," Lompoc Record (July 9, 1937), p. 1.

56. "Contractor for Building Marine Launchway Arrives," Lompoc Record (July 23, 1937), p. 1. According to this article the building operations were under the direction of C.E. Shannahan; "Launchway for Coast Guard to be Started," Lompoc Record (August 20, 1937), p. 1; "Start Launchway and Boathouse at Guard Station,"

Lompoc Record ( August 27, 1937), p. 1; "Launchway for Coast Guard is Being Constructed," Lompoc Record (September 24, 1937), p. 1,

57. "Guard Station Launchway to be Completed Soon," Lompoc Record (February 19, 1938), p. 1.

58. The bid for four independent generating plants--one for the Boathouse, two for the Administrative/Barracks Building, and one for the proposed Officer in Charge Cottage--was accepted on June 21, 1937 from the Kohler Generating Plant Company, Kohler, Wisconsin.

59. U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.: National Archives), Record Group 26.

60. The Lompoc Record mentions a "donkey engine" in an article entitled "Launchway for Coast Guard to be Started," August 20, 1937, p. 1.

61. Lompoc Record (February 18, 1938), p. 1.

62. U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.: National Archives), Record Group 26. The dory was suspended by rope and pulleys from a set of davits located in front of the Boathouse on the northeastern side of the dock.

63. The logs for the U.S. Coast Guard Station at Point Arguello are housed at the National Record Center, near Washington, D.C. There are sixteen logs and they all bear the number 2622.

64. The 1937 working drawings call out the stairs as "Disappearing Stairs."

65. U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.: National Archives), Record Group 26.

66. Ibid., no p. given.

67. There are three letters in the U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.: National Archives), Record Group 26, which indicate that a contract had been signed.

68. "Water Supply for Arguello Station," Lompoc Record (December 13, 1935), p. 1. The article stated that drilling would take place soon, and that bids had been

called for and would be "...opened this week,"

69. "Inventory of the U.S. Coast Guard Station at Point Arguello, California," 1958. U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.; National Archives), Record Group 26. Although the 10,000-gallon tank is listed in the Inventory, strangely no mention is made of the Water Treatment Building itself.

70. "Inventory," U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington D.C.; National Archives, February 24, 1944), Record Group 26.

71. op. cit., , no p. given.

72. In an article in the Lompoc Record (October 16, 1936), it was indicated that a call for bids was to be issued for the Boathouse, Lookout Tower and Flag Tower.

73. "Inventory," U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.: National Archives, February 24, 1944), Record Group 26.

74. U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.: National Archives), Record Group 26.

75. These and other prints of drawings are housed at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California.

76. It would appear that the Coast Guard continued to plan for the eventual construction of an Officer in Charge Cottage, for the Lompoc Record (October 21, 1938), p. 1 states that "Plans call for the eventual construction of a separate residence for the Chief."

77. "Inventory of the U.S. Coast Guard Station at Point Arguello, California," U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.: National Archives), Record Group 26.

78. The drawings for this Tower are located at Vandenberg Air Force Base, California; they were prepared by the District Engineering Office of the U.S. Coast Guard. The drawings are dated November 2, 1955, and were revised December



3, 1955.

79. The Colonial revival idiom employed in the buildings at Point Arguello is identical to the Boathouse Building erected at the same time (1936) at the U.S. Coast Guard Rescue Station at Humboldt Bay in northern California. The drawings for both stations were proposed in Washington, D.C. by the U.S. Coast Guard Civil Engineering Office.

80. The sixteen logs of the U.S. Coast Guard Station at Point Arguello, California, are located at the National Record Center outside of Washington, D.C., in Maryland. The logs embrace the years 1936 through 1941. The logs bear the number 2622.

81. Lompoc Record (November 27, 1936), p. 1.

82. Ibid., p. 1.

83. Los Angeles Times (June 13, 1941), pt.II, p. 2; Santa Barbara News Press (June 13, 1941), pp. 1 and 2; Lompoc Record (June 13, 1941), p. 1.

84. Santa Barbara News Press (June 14, 1941), p. 1.

85. Log of the U.S. Coast Guard Station at Point Arguello, California, for the month of December, 1941.

86. Ibid., no p. given.

87. U.S. Coast Guard Records (Washington, D.C.; National Archives), Record Group 26.

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Point Arguello, California

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- 1851 Santa Barbara County Office of Recorder  
Deed Book B, pp. 26.
- 1852 Santa Barbara County Office of Recorder  
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- 1867 Santa Barbara County Office of Recorder  
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- 1868 Santa Barbara County Office of Recorder  
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Deed Book H, pp. 278.
- 1878 Santa Barbara County Office of Recorder  
Deed Book T, pp. 91.
- 1879 Santa Barbara County Office of Recorder  
Deed Book W, pp. 507 (recorded September 3, 1880).  
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Deed Book U, pp. 372.
- 1883 Santa Barbara County Office of Recorder  
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- 1924 Santa Barbara County Office of Recorder  
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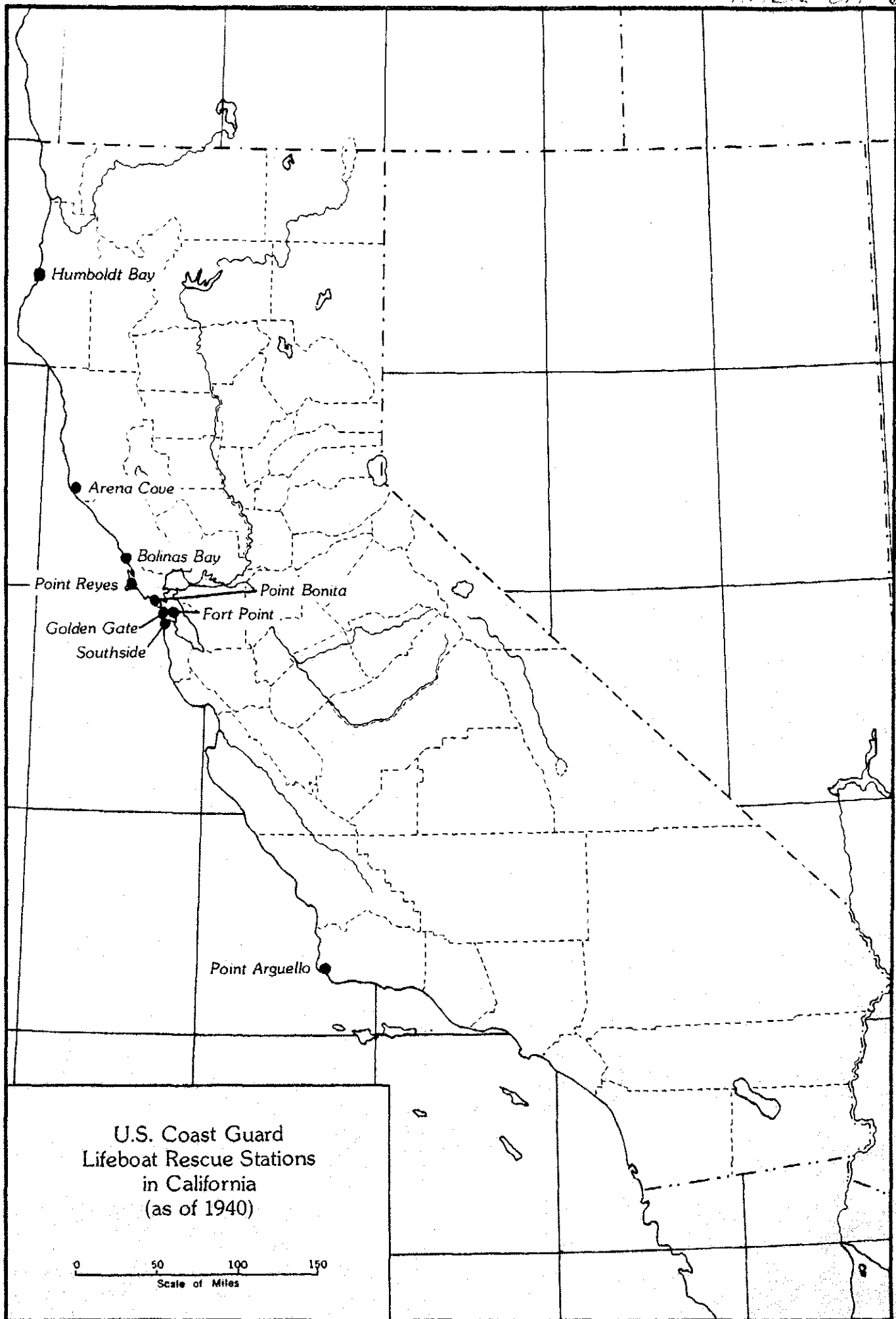
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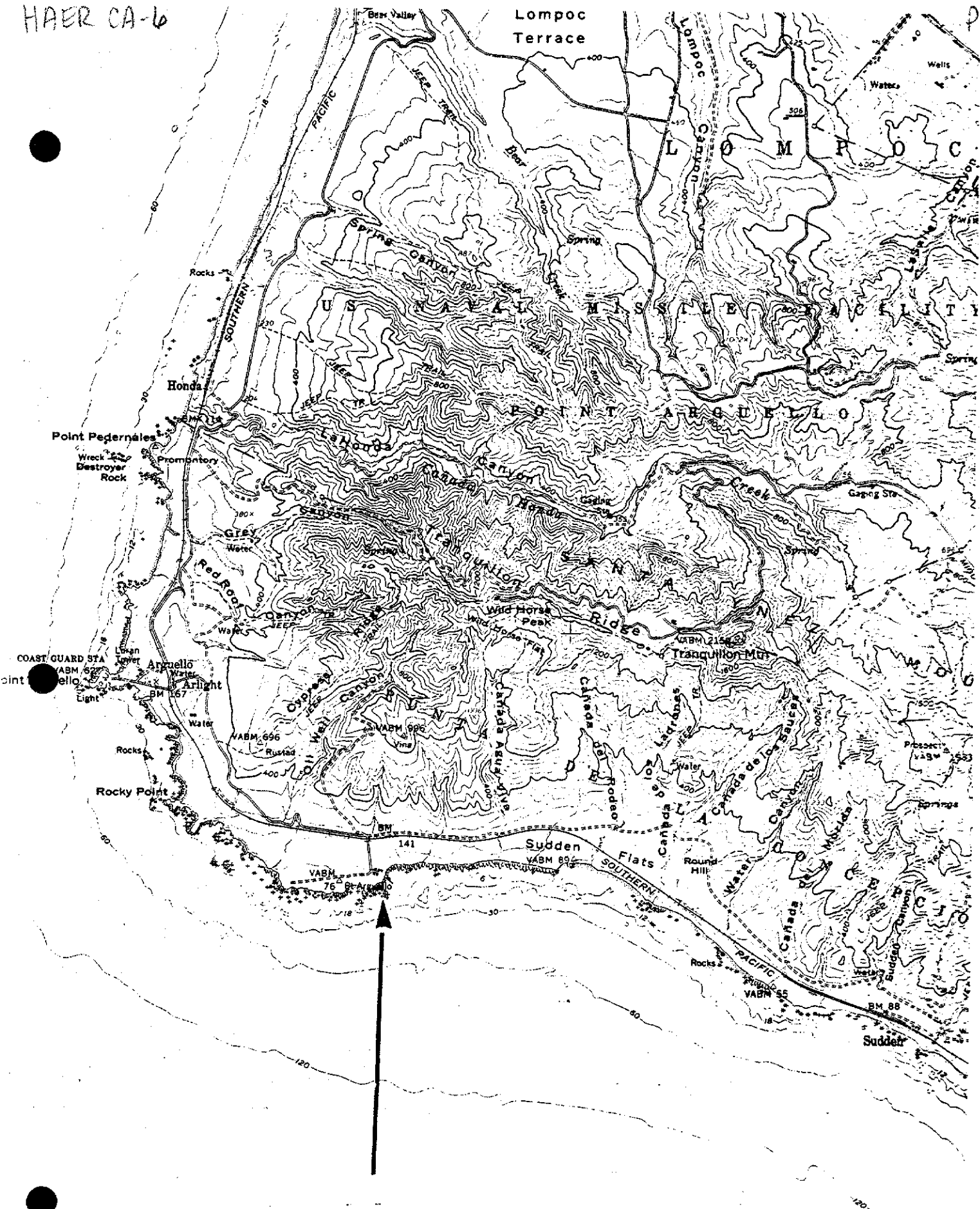
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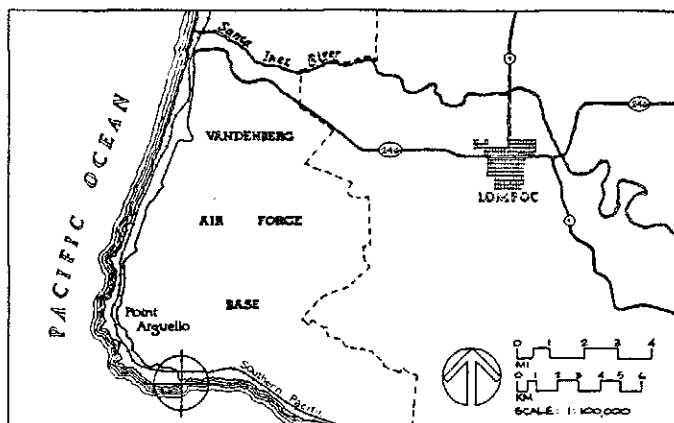
Location, Site Plan and Site Section

U.S. Coast Guard Rescue Station and Lookout Tower

Point Arguello, California

(HAER Drawing, 1979-80)

# U. S. COAST GUARD RESCUE STATION POINT ARGUELLO, CALIFORNIA



SITE LOCATION MAP

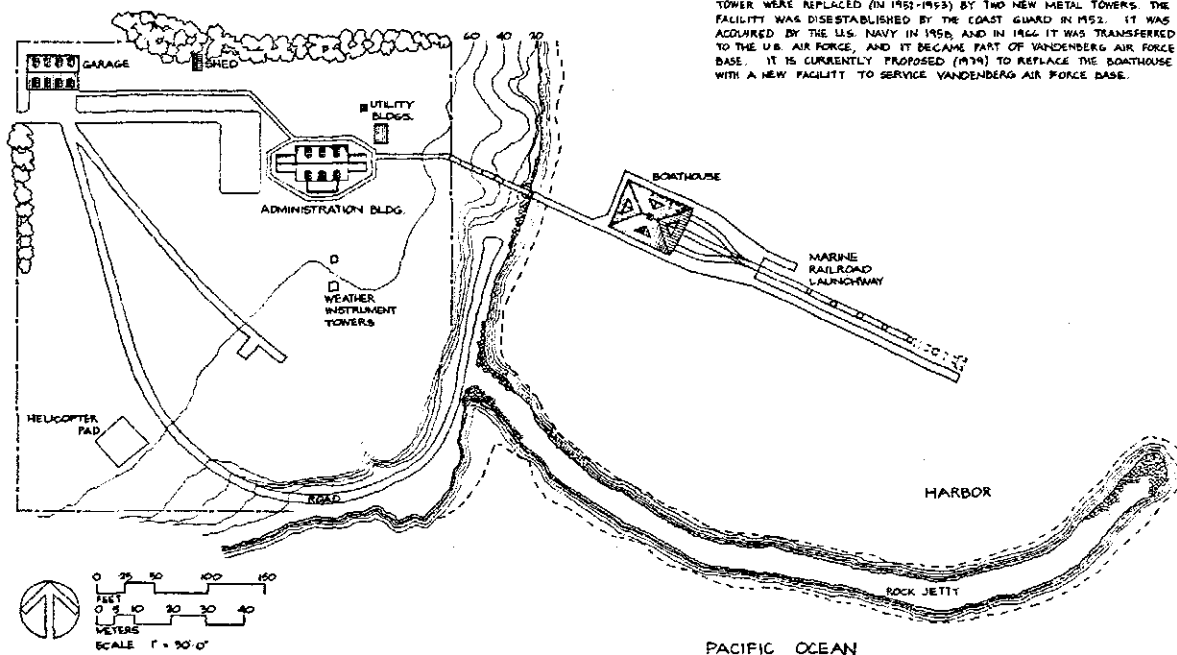
BASED ON U.S.G.C. 75 MIN. SERIES, 1959, POINT ARGUELLO, SURF  
TRANQUILLITY M.T.N. QUADRANGLES, UTM REFERENCE.

THE U.S. COAST GUARD RESCUE STATION AND LOOKOUT TOWER AT POINT ARGUELLO, CALIFORNIA, WAS ESTABLISHED ON DECEMBER 17, 1936, AND CEASED NORMAL OPERATIONS ON DECEMBER 31, 1941. THE SITE WAS PURCHASED BY THE COAST GUARD ON JULY 12, 1935, AND IT REMAINED UNDER THEIR JURISDICTION UNTIL FEBRUARY 10, 1958, WHEN IT WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE U.S. NAVY. THIS SITE, ON AN OPEN COVE APPROXIMATELY TWO MILES SOUTH OF THE POINT ARGUELLO LIGHTHOUSE, WAS SELECTED AS A LOCATION FOR A RESCUE STATION BECAUSE OF THE LONG HISTORY OF NAVAL DISASTERS WHICH HAVE OCCURRED ON THIS SECTION OF THE CALIFORNIA COAST.

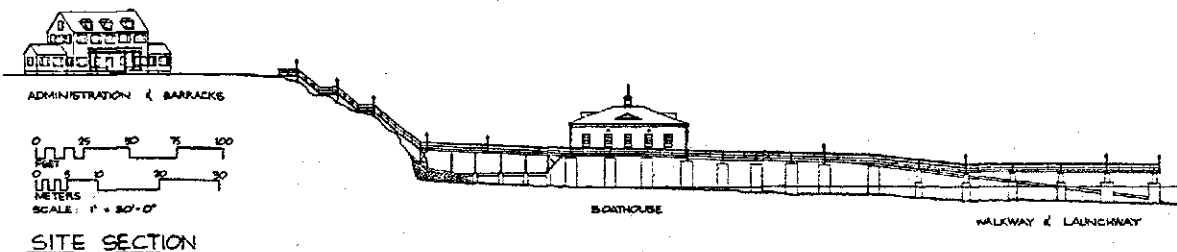
BETWEEN THE YEARS OF 1936 AND 1941 THE COAST GUARD CONSTRUCTED ON THE SITE AN ADMINISTRATION AND BARRACKS BLDG. (1936), A GARAGE BLDG. (1936), A SMALL WATER TREATMENT BLDG. (1936), A FLAG TOWER (1936), A LOOKOUT TOWER (1937), A GRANITE ROCK BREAKWATER (1937), AND A DOCK, MARINE RAILWAY AND BOATHOUSE (1937). ALL OF THESE STRUCTURES WERE DESIGNED BY THE CIVIL ENGINEERING OFFICE OF THE COAST GUARD IN WASHINGTON, D.C. AND THEY WERE BUILT ON CONTRACT BY PRIVATE CALIFORNIA CONSTRUCTION FIRMS. THE ARCHITECTURAL DIGNITY EVOKED WAS THAT OF THE RESIDENTIAL COLONIAL REVIVAL, A STYLE ALMOST UNIVERSALLY EMPLOYED (1900-1940) BY THE COAST GUARD FOR ITS MANY LAND FACILITIES.

WHEN ACTIVATED IN 1936 THE FACILITY WAS MANNED BY TWO OFFICERS AND SEVEN GURPHEN; WHEN IT CEASED ITS NORMAL OPERATION ON DECEMBER 31, 1941, THERE WERE ONE OFFICER AND FIFTEEN ENLISTED PERSONNEL. THE TWO PRINCIPLE ACTIVITIES OF THE FACILITY CENTERED ON THREE RESCUE BOATS SHELTERED IN THE BOATHOUSE AND THE MANNING OF THE FLAG TOWER AND THE LOOKOUT TOWER. THE THREE RESCUE BOATS COULD BE QUICKLY LAUNCHED ON A MARINE RAILROAD WHICH EXTENDED FROM THE BOATHOUSE TO THE HARBOR. DURING ITS BRIEF SIX YEAR PERIOD OF EXISTENCE THE FACILITY PARTICIPATED ON ONLY TWO OCCASIONS IN RESCUE OPERATIONS.

WITH THE ACTIVATING OF NEARBY CAMP COOKE ON OCTOBER 5, 1941, THE FACILITY WAS PARTIALLY OCCUPIED BY MILITARY PERSONNEL. BY THE END OF 1944 A NUMBER OF ADDITIONAL TEMPORARY BUILDINGS HAD BEEN ADDED TO THE SITE. AFTER 1945 THE SIGNAL TOWER AND THE LOOKOUT TOWER WERE REPLACED (IN 1953-1955) BY TWO NEW METAL TOWERS. THE FACILITY WAS DISESTABLISHED BY THE COAST GUARD IN 1952. IT WAS ACQUIRED BY THE U.S. NAVY IN 1958, AND IN 1966 IT WAS TRANSFERRED TO THE U.S. AIR FORCE, AND IT BECAME PART OF VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE. IT IS CURRENTLY PROPOSED (1979) TO REPLACE THE BOATHOUSE WITH A NEW FACILITY TO SERVICE VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE.



SITE PLAN



SITE SECTION

TEXT: D. BERNARD  
DRAWING: R. JOHNSON, A. BORISO 1980

U. S. COAST GUARD RESCUE STATION; POINT ARGUELLO, CALIFORNIA 1936-40  
POINT ARGUELLO AT VANDENBERG AIR FORCE BASE

LOMPOC

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

CALIFORNIA

SHEET

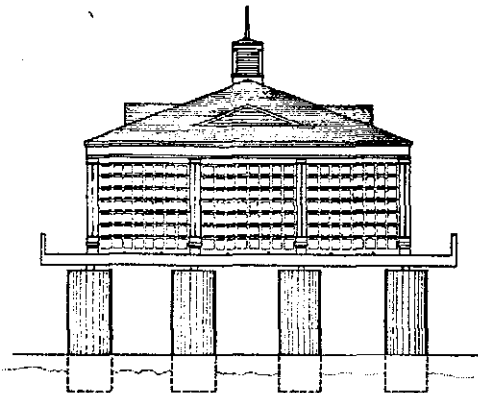
1 OF 3

East Elevation, Section, Plan of the Boathouse

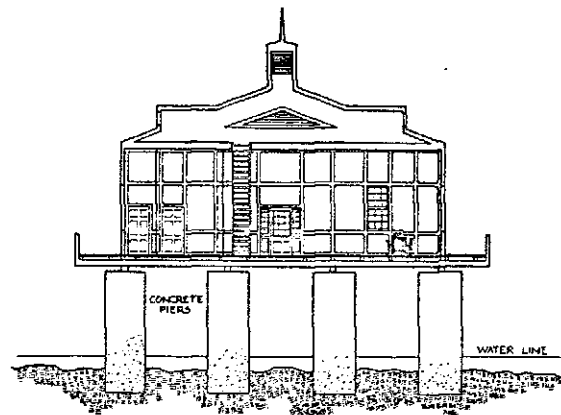
U. S. Coast Guard Rescue Station and Lookout Tower

Point Arguello, California

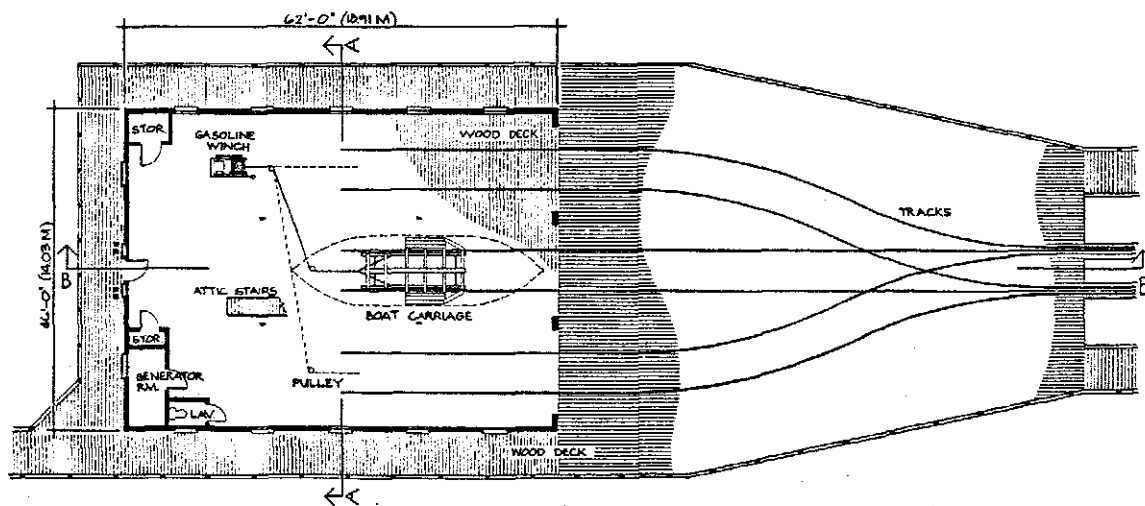
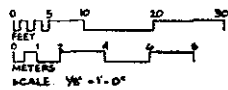
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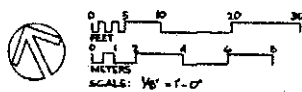
EAST ELEVATION



SECTION A-A



BOATHOUSE PLAN



DRAWING BY JOHNSON &amp; BORCHARD

U. S. COAST GUARD RESCUE STATION, POINT ARGUELLO, CALIFORNIA 1936-40  
POINT ARGUELLO AT VANDERBILT AIR FORCE BASE

SHEET

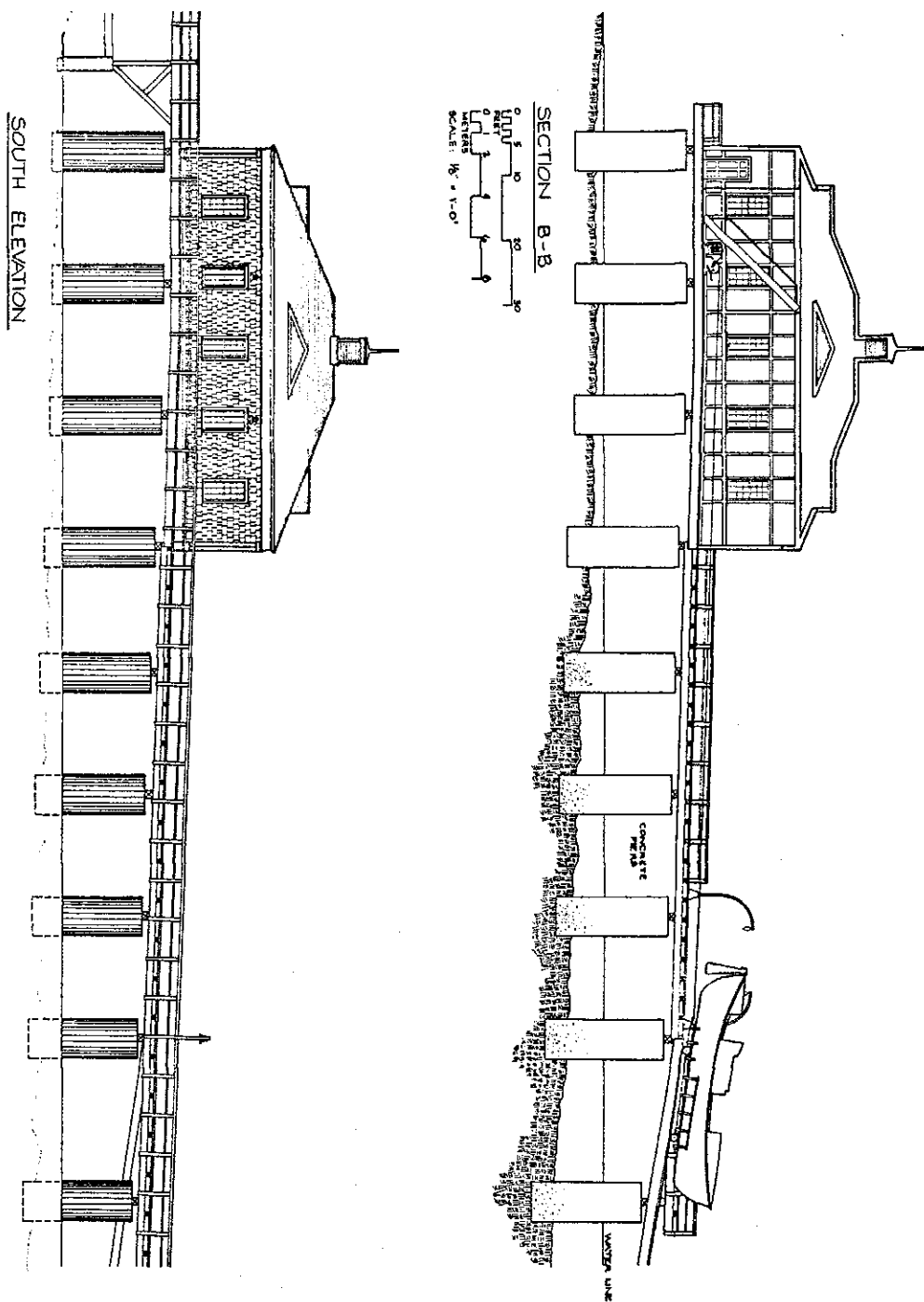
2 of 3

LOWPOC

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

CALIFORNIA

South Elevation and Section of the Boathouse  
U. S. Coast Guard Rescue Station and Lookout Tower  
Point Arguello, California  
(HAER Drawing, 1979-80)



DRAWING BY JOHNSON, A. DORSEY 1960

U. S. COAST GUARD RESCUE STATION, POINT ARGUELLO, CALIFORNIA 1936-40  
POINT ARGUELLO AT VANDERBERG AIR FORCE BASE

LOMPOC

COUNTY OF SANTA BARBARA

CALIFORNIA

SHEET  
3 OF 3